DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 199 242 SP 017 692

AUTHOR Murray, Frank B.
TITLE The Doctoral Portfolio as a Measure of Quality.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Standards; Competency Based Education; *Degree Requirements; *Doctoral Programs; *Educational Innovation; Evaluation Methods; Higher Education; *Professional Education; Schools of Education; *Student Evaluation

ABSTRACT

A school of education faculty designed the Doctoral Portfolio as a device for assessing their doctoral students' competence in the tasks that professional academics routinely perform. Each student assembled a portfolio after the completion of a set of core courses and before the dissertation. The components assessed in the portfolio were: (1) a research study written in publishable form; (2) a research presentation to at least one professional meeting; (3) at least one literature review, suitable for publication in a review journal; (4) a detailed course outline for one graduate semester in the student's specialization; (5) a review of current advanced textbooks at a publishable level; (6) the design, implementation, and evaluation of a curriculum unit or module; and (7) the dissertation proposal. After the proposal was transmitted to an advisory committee, the student was examined on its content. Eighteen students evaluated the program and rated all of the components except the curriculum design in the good to excellent range. The Doctoral Portfolio was found to be an innovative way to apply competency based education to doctoral training. (FG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Frank B. Murray
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED199242

The Doctoral Portfolio as a Measure of Quality

Frank B. Murray

University of Delaware

The Doctoral Portfolio is proposed as an alternative to the traditional doctoral comprehensive or qualifying examination. That examination, whether written or oral, places students in a situation they are not likely to experience again in their academic careers. Professional scholars are rarely called upon to respond at documented length to wide ranging questions posed by others. While the traditional examination meets some passage of professional rites criteria, it probably fails as a good predictor of subsequent academic achievement because it does not sample the variety of skills and competence demanded of professional academics. The open book and take-home variants of the traditional examination are not much more satisfactory in this regard.

While psychological principles rarely rise above the folk aphorisms of naive psychology, Guthrie's law is one psychological maxim that has wide generality and support. It states simply that the best predictor of future behavior in a situation is past behavior in the same or a similar situation. With this maxim in mind the Education faculty at the University of Delaware designed the Doctoral Portfolio as a device for assessing their doctoral students' competence in the tasks that professional academics routinely perform. Academics design courses, teach them, review books, review segments of the research literature, do research, present their research findings at colloquia and national meetings, submit their research for publication, write grant proposals, evaluate curricula, etc. While they have other professional roles, these were viewed as the central roles of doctoral training, and some assessment of the candidate's competence in them was thought to be

SP 017 692

more informative about the candidate's later performance of these tasks than the traditional qualifying examination or its variants. Under the guidance of an advisory committee chaired by the advisor, the student demonstrates his competence in his area of doctoral specialization by producing samples of his achievement in the various components of the professional academic's behavior. In the Delaware program the portfolio was assembled after the completion of a set of core courses and before the dissertation. The particular components assessed in the Delaware program centered on research production and teaching. Of course, other components could be sampled and required to fit the particular educational goals of a doctoral program.

The term "portfolio" is used in the sense of an artist's portfolio of products which is assembled by the artist to best represent his proficiency. The contents of the Delaware portfolio in Education were: N = 18

1. Research study. At lease one research study, conducted by the student, and written in publishable style was required. In the case of co-authored articles, at least one paper should have the student as first author.

2. Research presentation. Students were required to present their research at at least one local, regional or national professional meeting. Typically students presented a colloquium before the department and then found a program place at the annual meeting of an appropriate academic society.

3. Literature review. At least one literature review and analysis was required of suitable scope, quality, and style for publication in a review journal. It was expected that one review would serve as the introduction to the dissertation.

4. Course outline. A detailed course outline for a semester's graduate course in the student's specialization was required. The outline included a precis of class periods, reading assignments, and bibliography.

5. Text book review. The students were required to write a review of a current advanced text in the field at a level of style and quality that would be publishable.

6. Curriculum unit. Education students, particularly those preparing themselves for elementary and secondary curriculum supervision positions, were required to design a curriculum unit or module, implement it, and test and evaluate it.

7. Dissertation proposal. Some advisory committees preferred to delay the student's completion of this requirement until all the others were completed and favorably evaluated by the committee. The proposals often had the form of grant proposals and had to specify how the topic the student had chosen was related to previous scholarly work, how the topic was to be researched and analyzed, and the significance of the expected outcomes of the research for educational practice and theory.

We argued that if a student could do all these things, they were by that fact alone competent in the field of specialization. Still, the members of the advisory committee evaluated the products as they were produced and after the portfolio was completed, the advisory committee examined the student on its content. This examination was usually oral, but occasionally it was written, and was conducted to determine whether or not the student had done and understood the products in the portfolio. This examination was consistent with the guiding principles of the

innovation, since academics are frequently called upon to discuss and clarify products such as those which comprise the portfolio.

Students acquired the formal competence to do the portfolio items in the usual ways--formal courses, directed reading and study, and collaboration with faculty and other students--although they tended to enroll in more special problem courses than the faculty who were teaching regular courses might have wished. In their formal evaluation of the value of the various portfolio, the eighteen students in the program who had completed the portfolio evaluated the research study, paper presentation, literature review, course outline, book review, and dissertation proposal in the good to excellent range in their contribution to the students' professional development. The curriculum unit evaluation was not thought to be of great benefit, falling in the adequate to good range. When the students were asked which contents were essential to their professional development, the proportions of students endorsing each item varied as follows: dissertation proposal (.72), literature review (.61), research study (.56), paper presentation (.50), course outline (.28), book review (.28), and curriculum unit evaluation (.17).

The portfolio innovation is, of course, a variant of competency based educational innovations. Its uniqueness in this instance rests in its application to doctoral training. Its success rests partly in the positive evaluations of those who have used it to demonstrate their competence, but the more conclusive evaluation is to be had in any differential performance of the graduates. It is unlikely that any measurable effects on career development will be obtainable that could unambiguously be attributed to the portfolio innovation. All graduates, however, have found employment appropriate to their specialization. Most serve as college and university faculty, some as curriculum supervisors, some as school district research staff, and some have taken post doctoral positions. Those who have changed

positions have accepted positions superior to the ones they left, and the rest report high levels of job satisfaction. It seems, on the basis of this limited experience, that the Doctoral Portfolio innovation merits wider consideration as a method for assessing and determining the quality of education personnel.

(Discussion will follow presentation)

Biographical Sketches

Dr. Frank B. Murray, Dean of the College of Education at the University of Delaware, served as Director of Graduate Studies in Education at the University of Delaware from 1971 to 1977. During this time period, the doctoral portfolio was established as a device for assessing doctoral student progress and competence.

Dr. Doris L. Abrams, Assistant to the Dean for Research and Evaluation, College of Education, University of Delaware, is a graduate of the doctoral program in Education at the University of Delaware.

Title: The Doctoral Portfolio as a Measure of Quality

Format: Presentation

Description: The doctoral portfolio is discussed as a alternative to traditional methods of evaluating doctoral students, such as the doctoral comprehensive or qualifying examination.

Presenters: Frank B. Murray, Dean
College of Education
University of Delaware
Newark, Delaware 19711
(302) 738-2311